

Infection Control Policy

Statement and purpose of Policy

Standard infection control procedures underpin safe practice, reducing the risk to staff and Clients from healthcare related infections. Since examination and medical history alone cannot reliably identify all Clients colonised or infected with transmissible pathogens standard infection control procedures represent the standard of care to be used routinely for all clients regardless of perceived or known infection risk factors.

Effective hand hygiene and the wearing of the recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are critical components of standard infection control procedures and when used as part of a bundle of measures, correctly implemented, will minimise the spread of infectious organisms and reduce healthcare acquired infection.

For standard precautions to be effective, high levels of compliance must be achieved by all Serenta Homecare staff. Experience shows that achieving high levels of appropriate hand hygiene compliance can be difficult, however with appropriate training and support, this can be achieved. Serenta Homecare recognises that continuous commitment is required and will be championed by senior management and will appoint a recognised lead for Infection Control.

Failure to comply with this policy could result in disciplinary action.

Purpose

To demonstrate that Serenta Homecare has a strong commitment to effective implementation of standard infection control procedures, including hand hygiene and the wearing of PPE.

To identify clear responsibilities to enable the application of standard infection control procedures as a routine part of clinical practice as outlined in Criterion 9 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008, the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infection (DH, 2015)

To provide a framework through which a high level of hand hygiene and the wearing of PPE compliance is achieved

To ensure that all relevant staff undertake annual update training

Definitions

Standard infection control precautions/procedures - A minimum standard of care applied to all clients regardless of perceived or known infection risk factors.

Hand hygiene – Removal or destruction of microorganisms on the hands. It includes hand washing with soap and water, hand disinfection using alcohol hand rub and surgical hand antisepsis with an approved antiseptic product.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Government recommended protective equipment to prevent cross infection from staff to client and vice versa.

A 'sharp' – is any object, which can puncture the skin. Examples include hypodermic needles, suture needles, scalpel blades, pieces of bone, teeth splinters, glass ampoules, and pathological specimens.

Inoculation Injury – when a person is exposed to blood or body fluid of another person. This includes the following:

- Penetrating injuries from a sharp object contaminated with blood/body fluid
- Contamination of a broken skin surface (e.g., cuts, grazes)
- Splashes into the mouth or eyes

Duties and Responsibilities of Staff

The Directors are responsible for supporting and encouraging compliance with policy through delegation to the Registered Manager who will lead Infection Prevention and Control procedures.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Registered Manager as the lead for Infection Prevention and Control is responsible for ensuring that processes are in place for:

- Embedding routine hand hygiene as an integral part of company 'culture', i.e., something that is expected of all staff who work within Serenta Homecare as a matter of clinical governance.
- Regarding lapses in standard infection control procedures as a serious clinical issue.
- Supporting mandatory hand hygiene and infection control education at induction for all staff and appropriate updates for staff involved in direct client contact.
- Ensuring all new employees are provided with written information on hand hygiene and other standard infection control procedures on employment.

- Ensuring all necessary PPE products are provided to support Infection Control e.g., mask, gloves, aprons etc.
- Ensuring that appropriate PPE is supplied and worn in line with relevant government guidance

Training

All staff working within Serenta Homecare must be trained in standard infection control procedures including hand hygiene. This will be delivered to all staff, both clinical and non-clinical as part of induction training in accordance with the Training Policy.

If SCC/ CCG commissioned care is undertaken, these contracts also mandate infection control training for all staff members.

Attendance and completion of infection control training will be monitored

Records of any training will be kept on employees' files in accordance with the Training Policy.

Process for Monitoring the Effectiveness and Compliance with Procedures

To monitor compliance with this policy, the auditable standards will be monitored as follows:

No.	Minimum Requirement	Evidenced by
1	Compliance with the policy will be monitored by the Registered Manager and designate individual	Training records Spot checks
2	Infection control training to be undertaken all Serenta Homecare staff	Training records

Undertaken by senior staff members.

Any barriers to implementation will be risk-assessed and added to the risk register.

Any changes in practice needed will be highlighted to Serenta Homecare staff as required and the policy will be updated.

Use of Face Masks

Care workers are not required to wear a face mask at all times during routine domiciliary care. However, surgical mask should be worn in the following circumstances:

- When providing care to a client with a suspected or confirmed respiratory infection (e.g. COVID-19, influenza, RSV), particularly where symptoms include coughing, fever, or breathlessness
- When undertaking care where there is a risk of exposure to blood or body fluids
- If the client requests that a mask is worn during care delivery
- If the care worker chooses to wear a mask for personal reassurance, this is supported

Masks should be removed and disposed of after each care visit. 'Sessional use' (wearing the same mask across multiple clients) is not recommended.

Standard PPE for Routine Care (No Suspected Infection and No Body Fluid Exposure)

PPE Item	Guidance
• Disposable gloves	Used when contact with blood, body fluids, mucous membranes, or contaminated items is likely. Changed between tasks and between clients.
• Disposable plastic apron	Used when there is a risk of contamination from body fluids or during personal care tasks. Changed between clients.
• Face mask	Not required for routine care where no infection risk is identified.
• Eye protection	Not required for routine care unless a splash risk is identified.

PPE for Suspected or Confirmed Respiratory Infection

Where a client has symptoms of a respiratory infection (including COVID-19, flu, or similar illness), the following PPE should be used:

PPE Item	Guidance
• Disposable gloves	Single-use; change between tasks and clients
• Disposable plastic apron	Single-use; change between clients
• Surgical mask	Must be worn for all direct care activities

All PPE must be removed and disposed of safely after each visit before attending another client.

Client Choice

- If a client requests staff wear a face mask, this should be accommodated where possible
- Staff may choose to wear a mask based on personal preference

Environmental Hygiene and Ventilation

- Ensure rooms are well ventilated where safe and appropriate (e.g. opening windows)
- Increase cleaning of frequently touched surfaces during outbreaks or suspected infection

- Use standard household cleaning products (detergent and disinfectant/bleach-based products where appropriate)

Waste Disposal (Suspected Infection Cases)

Where a client has a suspected or confirmed respiratory infection:

- Dispose of tissues, continence products, and contaminated items in a lined waste bag
- Double-bag waste and dispose of in outside waste

Laundry Handling

- Do not shake dirty laundry to reduce the risk of dispersing pathogens
- Wash items according to manufacturer's instructions using standard detergents at the appropriate temperature
- Wash heavily soiled items separately where possible

Removal and Replacement of PPE

PPE should be changed immediately if it becomes:

- Damaged
- Visibly soiled (blood/body fluids)
- Damp
- Difficult to breathe through (masks)
- Uncomfortable or causing skin irritation

PPE should always be removed safely following correct infection control procedures, with hand hygiene performed immediately afterwards.

Hand Hygiene

Staff should perform hand hygiene immediately before every episode of care and after any activity or contact that potentially results in your hands becoming contaminated. This includes after the removal of PPE, equipment decontamination and waste handling. Consider carrying hand sanitiser or cleaning wipes if there may not be suitable facilities for washing your hands in a client's home.

COVID 19 Vaccine

Serenta Homecare supports and encourages staff to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination in line with current UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance and the NHS vaccination programme.

COVID-19 vaccination is not a mandatory requirement for employment within domiciliary/mental health service. However, staff are encouraged to consider vaccination as part of their personal health protection and to help reduce the risk of transmission to vulnerable clients.

Where staff choose not to be vaccinated, this will not in itself prevent them from working, provided they continue to follow all infection prevention and control procedures and organisational policies.

Covid-19 vaccinations can be booked here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-Covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually

Document Control

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Author: Fran Beardsmore